

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A toothbrush bristle, comprising:
a bristle member adapted for use as part of a set of toothbrush bristles in forming a toothbrush brushhead, wherein the bristle member has a stepped configuration, including a smallest diameter, flexible top portion at an upper end of the bristle member having a diameter of approximately 0.005 inches and a length of approximately 0.01 inches, a middle portion having a diameter slightly larger than the top portion, approximately 0.006 inches, and a base portion having the largest diameter, providing stiffness and support for the bristle member, the base portion having a diameter of approximately 0.007 inches, wherein the top, middle and base portions are all straight and have substantially uniform diameters along their respective lengths.

2. (canceled)

3. (original) A bristle of claim 2, wherein the top portion has such a diameter and is otherwise configured to conveniently enter between teeth and gums of a user.

4. (canceled)

5. (canceled)

6. (original) A bristle of claim 1, wherein the top bristle portion has a free end which is rounded to facilitate entry of the top bristle portion between the teeth and gums of the user

7. (currently amended) A brushhead, comprising:
a plurality of tufts of bristle members, the tufts arranged and set into a base plate to form a brushhead, wherein the bristle member has a stepped configuration, including a smallest diameter flexible top portion at an upper end of the bristle member having a diameter of approximately 0.005 inches and a length of approximately 0.01 inches, a middle portion having a diameter of approximately 0.006 inches and a length of approximately 0.01 inches, and a base portion having the largest diameter, providing stiffness and support for the bristle member, wherein the base portion has a diameter of approximately 0.007 inches wherein the top portion ~~has such a diameter and~~ is otherwise configured to

conveniently enter between teeth and gums of a user.

8. (canceled)

9. (canceled)